


TWO
SERMONS

OF

April, 1865.



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TWO SERMONS

OF

APRIL, 1865.

These discourses, printed at the request of persons who heard them, may serve as a memento of that wide contrast of intense feeling,—that wondrous blending of a nation's exultation and grief,—which will render the month of April, 1865, the most memorable of any in the recollection of the existing generation.

A KEY TO OUR JOY.

A

S E R M O N

DELIVERED IN

THE TRINITARIAN CHURCH,

ON

F A S T D A Y,

April 13, 1865,

BY WHEELOCK CRAIG.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

New Bedford, Mass.:

E. ANTHONY & SONS, PRINTERS, 67 UNION STREET.

1865.

S E R M O N .

I SAMUEL XI. 12, 13, 14, 15. "And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? Bring the men, that we may put them to death. And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel. Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal: and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly."

At the period to which these words refer, they were having about such a time in the land of Canaan as we are having in our own country now. It was the clearing off after a storm. The person regularly appointed to administer the government had been rejected by a portion of the people. Providence had employed the scourge of war to bring them to terms. A victorious battle produced a political reaction in the hearts of the disaffected. An impassioned loyalty, in the most sudden manner, as if by a miracle, seized possession of every heart. They repaired to Gilgal and "renewed the kingdom," amid religious sacrifices, and fervent public rejoicings. It is our privilege to participate in a similar scene on a far larger scale. We had heard of such things in history,—the wild frenzy of

delight in Philadelphia when, in the dark night, the watchman's cry rang through the silent streets, announcing that Cornwallis had surrendered; the bell-ringing and bonfires and cannonades in England, at the tidings that Wellington had conquered Bonaparte at Waterloo; the midnight rapture in Boston, in 1816, when it became known that a vessel had just arrived from Europe announcing the declaration of peace. Our hearts had bounded at the reading of those things; but who supposed that we should live to see such a day,—that in our life-time and land there would occur one of the greatest wars of the world, and that our ears would be thrilled with the rumor of its mighty and awful battles, and that it would be ours to raise the shout of triumph at the tidings of the last battle, crowning our soldiers with victory, and our nation with deliverance? It is a cup that can be partaken of only once or twice in a century. It is a great privilege to have been permitted to live until the ushering in of such a day.

What are the proper feelings to be cherished by us to-day, in view of these circumstances?

It should be a day of thanksgiving. The things essential to a thanksgiving are that one be joyful, and that he acknowledge God as the author of his joy. We have abundant occasion at this time for the fulfilment of both of these conditions. We cannot expect ever to have so much public occasion for it again. It is a time when devout joy should fill the heart of every man and woman and child in the land. There are some who appear to feel that they and their chosen associates have a monopoly of the joy, and are entitled to turn it all into a secular and partisan channel; and when they meet persons not of their own clique, there is a look in their eye, or an utterance from their lips, which

says, What! are you glad too? what right have you to participate in this gladness? Such feelings evince very great narrowness and illiberality of feeling, and ignorance of human nature. Some of the most joyful hearts to-day are those whom the Pharisees of loyalty and patriotism would shut out of their synagogue; it is the very fervor of their yearning for such a day of peace as this, which has given them hesitancy in approving of some of the measures which, under the good providence of God, have ripened into this auspicious consummation; and he is a cur of the kennel, and a foul fly in the ointment, who mars the jubilant harmony of the hour by obtruding such objections. Let the men of every shade of opinion, in oblivion of the past, come freely forward upon the broad national platform, and join us in making the welkin ring with exultant shouts. Who can have it in his heart to think of private feuds? All who occupy that platform hold out to every one accepting it the hand of welcome.

Let us be thankful that the havoc of property and the disturbance of peaceful industry have been checked, that exorbitant prices are to be reduced, and that those who have been pinched with want are to obtain relief, that the currency will return to a settled basis, and that trade will flow once more in its wonted channels. Let us be thankful that the outbursts of folly and irrational passion and blind and lawless force, incident to so fierce a commotion, are to give place once more to the calm sway of order and reason. Let us be thankful that the period of carnage and bloodshed is at an end; that the cause for which some of our loved ones have laid down their lives has triumphed,—filling, it may be, their glorified spirits with a rapturous gratitude deeper than ours,—and that our soldiers who survive can

desist from their weary marches, their anxious vigils, their frosty bivouacs, their perilous charges, their tedious and painful confinements in prisons and hospitals, and laying aside, let us hope, forever, their burdensome military equipments, can come joyfully home from the war, and bid a final adieu to the hardships and temptations of the encampment and the campaign. Let us, above all, be thankful that the dreaded gulf of dubious strife and impenetrable contingency, which we shuddered and trembled at the thought of entering, has been safely surmounted, and that the secret blessings which Providence had deposited in those transcendent allotments are about to be unfolded. We have been afflicted; alleviations and consolations have been mingled with the cup. Let us be grateful. How we dreaded this ordeal, and begged that, if possible, it might pass from us! How we felt willing to endure almost everything, and to forego almost everything, sooner than encounter it! With what unutterable forebodings our illustrious patriots from Washington downwards have regarded it, and importunately entreated the people to put far from them, at whatever sacrifice, the unknown, awful woe! We can hear even yet the tones of our great New England statesman declaring, with horror, that beyond the confines of so terrible a strife he dared not look, and that even his far-seeing eyes could not penetrate the veil, and imploring that not in his life-time there might dawn so ominous a day. Our progress through this struggle has been like that of a ship careering fog-wrapped through a midnight storm, like that of the prophet's steed rushing against the drawn sword of the angel, like that of the Israelites going down into the sea. But a tranquil morning has dawned upon the stormy midnight. The angel has sheathed his threatening sword. The sea is

crossed. Let Miriam and her companions go forth with timbrels and with dances, and shout, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." Let the nation proclaim, "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, mine hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

You perceive, by the way, my friends, how in the multifarious past literature of the world, it is only the Bible which rises above the key-note of our present experience, and goes beyond our powers of heartfelt utterance in this hour. Its divine origin and infinite fulness are evinced in the fact that it sounds all the utmost depths of human feeling, and reaches out beyond the farthest scope of thought or emotion possible to man. Of no other literary production can this fact be affirmed; and it proves that the Bible can have come only from the hand which fashioned the soul of man.

For what was the task set before our nation at the out-

break of the rebellion? Why, it was to confound all the parallels of history, to confute the predictions of all intelligent observers throughout the whole world, to do what never had been done, and what all men had united in saying never could be done. It was to introduce unheard of and startling precedents. It was *to achieve the impracticable*. George Washington did not believe that we could do this thing. Daniel Webster did not believe it. James Buchanan did not believe it. Abraham Lincoln did not believe it. William H. Seward did not believe it. Neither the Charleston nor the Chicago convention of 1860 believed it. William Lloyd Garrison did not believe it. Wendell Phillips did not believe it. Henry Ward Beecher did not believe it. They hoped, each that the country would be preserved by being led in some other path; but none dared to hope that it could be saved by walking in this path. Some, like Webster, hoped to maintain the union by tolerating slavery. Others, like Phillips, hoped to destroy slavery by dissolving the union. Others, like Beecher and Greeley, hoped that slavery would die an easy death, without subjecting the land to this overwhelming convulsion. But no man was so progressive as to conceive of reaching the issue through precisely the channel in which we have passed. It would have been foolhardy in the extreme to have done so. Had you asked any man four years ago, Can we raise an army of millions, can we incur a debt of billions, can our land endure the tread of those countless hosts, and become wet with the gore of those thousands of the slain on a hundred battle-fields, can we bear up under deferred hope through campaign after campaign, can the loyal states bring the haughty, imperious South, with its immense agricultural resources, and its inextricable commercial affiliations, into

humble submission within four years; can our country in its raw youth, nursed in the habitudes of peace, become in so brief a period the mightiest military power of all time;—can all this come about, and the lithe, elastic, scarcely visible strands of our civil fabric not part under the strain?—had you put this question to any man, he would have deemed you mad in asking it. And yet Providence has put this question, and has answered it, answered it in our favor, if we may believe the sight of our eyes, if we are not dreaming; but the joy is so great that it seems as if we must be indeed in a dream. We rise from our couches where we have slumbered in darkness, and look forth from the misty mountain-top, and, if we are not deceived, we see the clear, blue firmament, and the bright sun shining through. On the wings of the blessed zephyrs there is borne to our weary, aching ears that gracious word PEACE. And now is it not beyond question that every one in the land, save those whom the blow of victory has crushed, is glad, is thankful, is religiously grateful before God for these wonderful mercies? Can there be any selfish, jealous, malignant monopoly of this jubilee? For any lack of past agreement, shall one despoil a neighbor of his meed of joy on this occasion? He who has it in his heart to do this is unworthy of living in such an hour.

The more we inspect and analyze these events, the more we feel that only the eye of God has looked through them from the beginning to the end, and that only the hand of God has impelled us onward in our strange, and thrilling, and now auspicious career.

There are two or three points in the history of these years which specially illustrate this position.

One is the fact that so many elements of destructive

power were allowed to consolidate themselves into the movement for a disruption of the government. That black cloud was permitted to gather up all the lightning in the atmosphere, and hurl it in overwhelming bolts at our institutions, that the experiment of assailing them might be thoroughly tried once for all, and that all our citizens in every section of the nation, and the whole world, might be convinced of the hopelessness of attempting to overthrow them. Accordingly it was providentially arranged that the project of secession should have something better to rest upon than a mere spirit of ambitious insurgency and selfish misrule. There was much sincerity, and well-meaning though misguided patriotism, and earnest though deluded conscientiousness, mingled with that most deplorable and infatuated movement. A large portion of the rebels honestly thought themselves to be in the right; they regarded themselves as threatened with oppression; they supposed that the time had come for setting up a new government; they misapprehended, and had done so from the beginning, the bearing of their original act in ratifying the constitution, and the nature of their obligations resulting from that act. They felt that God approved of what they were doing. This augmented their moral strength, and intensified their determination. And now that the danger is past, we cannot regret it. The country having withstood the shock, is all the stronger for the momentum of this blow. It is a good thing, a boon from Providence, that all the morbid humors lurking in the body politic were brought together, and led to discharge themselves from this fearful imposthume, the threatening deadliness of which, now that it has healed, confirms all the more the soundness of our constitution.

The hand of Providence can be seen in the hampering of

the government during the incipient stages of the rebellion, and in preventing it from discerning or asserting its powers of self-defence. Surprise has been often expressed, and bitter censure has been inflicted upon the administration which preceded that of President Lincoln for not summarily crushing secession at its birth. If Buchanan had possessed the spirit of Jackson, it is often affirmed, we should have been spared this war. But the circumstances of the case were totally unprecedented. Those in which Jackson was placed furnish no analogy to them. To demand of the party then retiring from power a forcible encounter with the South, is to exact of them a magnanimity greater than human. It would have involved a surrender of all their cherished political principles. It was their avowed belief that the drawing of the sword would bring on all the consequences which have since resulted. They dared not do it. They apprehended that it would prove fatal. Their successors shared with them this apprehension. They were ready to concede that the government could not survive such a conflict as that through which we have passed: but they had no idea that such a conflict was in store for us. They did not believe that a forcible attempt to subdue the South would be followed by the costly, protracted, bloody and terrible struggle which has actually been experienced. They entered on their path not dreaming whither it would lead them. This mistake of theirs emboldened them to strike the blow. They had no faith in the resources, or the military strength, of the South. Hence they were not afraid to encounter them. And God carried them through, contrary to the expectations which they would themselves have cherished, had they foreseen the real formidableness of their adversary. A pilot cannot be expected to push a ship on in her course, when he knows that just before her there is a bar across

the channel. Another pilot, ignoring the existence of the bar, may press her forward. And the crew should adore God, no doubt, if, at the nick of time, He sends a mighty gale and an unwonted surge which sweeps the keel safely over. Now the point which I adduce as calling for our religious gratitude is, not merely, or chiefly, the fact that we have gone harmlessly over the bar, but that we were led into precisely that channel. It promotes the well-being of the nation, for all coming time, that the rebellion was not suppressed in its incipient stages, that it ran its full length, that the experiment of breaking up this government was thoroughly tried, and carried out to its utmost length, under the most favorable auspices. Had those who made the attempt failed at the outset, they would some time or other probably have tried it again. But now they will never try this dreadful experiment again. It is well therefore that God made it a moral impossibility for the administration to which I have referred to adopt any other course than that which was adopted. I am aware that we are not likely all to agree in regard to the historical premises leading to this conclusion; but we shall kindly pardon in one another this difference; and granting the premises, I know we shall all agree in the conclusion. If it was true that political consistency and moral conviction held the President in 1860 to the course which he pursued, we must all confess, in view of what has at last transpired, that this has been overruled for the good of the nation. We were driven in consequence to take a desperate leap over a horrid chasm; but now that we are over, we are the better off for it. As Dr. Watts tells us,

“ Timorous mortals start and shrink ”

from such a chasm,

And fear to launch away ”;

but they feel it to be a good transition when their feet are securely planted on the other shore.

Then notice the providential trap which was set, if it is not irreverent to use the expression, to entice the loyal states into a unanimous enthusiasm in favor of maintaining the union. Six years ago, the union was at a discount in the popular estimation of the North. It was entangled in the question of slavery, and hence lay under a stigma. One who would be popular had to be very silent, if he felt much on that subject. The more progressive among us did not hesitate to scout the union, and to style our national banner "a flaunting lie." Those who were more cautious, contented themselves with ridiculing the fear of dissolution as preposterous. Now there was infinite adroitness in the providence, so salutary too, which managed the moves in the game in such a way that the avowed support of the union, instead of devolving merely upon a party, became a universal enthusiasm, and linked itself in cordial league with the very ideas which had previously stood opposed to it. You remember how all that was brought about. There is no time now for describing the process. But certainly it was a very wonderful, as well as beneficent development. Vast and inestimable results hinged upon it.

But just as a trap was providentially set to revive the enthusiasm of anti-slavery men in favor of the union, a trap was also set to allure,—what shall I call them?—I wish not to use terms having any invidious bearing either way; I am simply reviewing the history, in a kindly spirit, to gather up its religious lesson;—well, call them unionists, conservatives, Democrats, or what you will,—to allure these into active cooperation in military interference with the rebellious movements of the South. You remember this

chapter of events also. I need not enlarge upon it. The mere suggestion will recall it all. The early phase of the war on the part of the North was a conservative one. Fremont was relieved of his command in Missouri. Care was taken not to interfere with certain kinds of property among the rebels in our military procedures. Wendell Phillips was incensed. This posture of affairs occasioned, in some quarters, severe animadversion. I allude to it for the sake of making this simple comment. Remember, this is my only comment upon it one way or the other, whether in praise or dispraise. It enlarged the area of support for the government. It drew into the ranks of supporters of the government a multitude of men, and a multitude of editors, and a multitude of military recruits, who would not otherwise have stood in those ranks. And when subsequently the operations assumed a new phase, these men were already fixed; they could not go back; the momentum had been imparted; a more national and a less partisan aspect had been secured for the administration. This approximate nationalizing of the war is a very strange and intricate providential effect, and has powerfully contributed to the successful result. It confounded the expectations of the seceders. And it will puzzle future historians, as it already puzzles Europeans, to account for it.

While passing by so many, I must point to one other thing in which the hand of God is seen. It is the sweeping march of our arms, which has at last conquered a multitude of strongholds, placed us in the capital of the enemy, and forced his best general and his chief army to surrender. What could be more surprising, or unlooked for, than the train of events which has brought this about? Our confi-

dence has been put from time to time in a long succession of men who have taken the lead,—Scott, McDowell, and the many who have followed. But two years ago who was reposing his trust in Grant, in Sherman, or in Sheridan? It is astonishing how, from an unobtrusive rising, these luminaries have shot upwards into the zenith, filling the firmament with their resplendence, and winning imperishable renown. There have also been many times when we seemed to be upon the eve of taking Richmond. But I think no one at a distance from it had any thought a week before last Saturday morning that we were winning instant possession of it. That steady tread of a conquering host which began to startle the ears of the world at Vicksburg, that wonderful march which stretched eastward and then northward, beginning at Atlanta, the fiery chivalry of Sheridan, the closing in of the armies around the devoted capital like the coil of a mighty serpent, and then the stately, courteous pageant of the final surrender,—these swift-rushing and inconceivable events which seem like a romance or a dream, instil this lesson: “It is the Lord’s doing, it is marvellous in our eyes; be still and know that I am God: Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.”

We may be sure that within these inscrutable allotments are deposited fruits of blessing, the nature of which we may or may not be able to conceive, but which will hereafter develop themselves. God must have some good purpose in store for us, or he would not have enabled the nation to survive this storm. There is abundant reason then why we should rejoice, and why our rejoicing should assume the form of religious gratitude and thanksgiving.

One cannot help feeling that this whole tissue of events is a historic mystery, a providential riddle, whose only true

solution lies in the consideration which seems to have escaped us all, that certain schemes of man run in accordance with, and others stand in antagonism to the eternal purposes of God. The former he indorses, and crowns with success; the latter he baffles, and brings to naught. All human schemes have to abide this criterion. The issue in many instances cannot be foreseen. While the case is pending, it is man's duty in lowly resignation to await the result, striving in all things to conform his activity to the Divine will, and humbly imploring celestial guidance.

This duty of thanksgiving need not interrupt our consistent compliance with the request of the Governor to observe this day as a season of contrition and humiliation. The gifts which make us glad are but promised as yet; they are by no means fully in our possession. We must see to it lest our transgressions frustrate their fruition, and cause us to forfeit them. And there are yet other favors needed by us which we should solicit with prayer and fasting. It is a wonder that God can exercise forbearance towards so guilty a people, and load us with benefits. Our iniquities provoke his judgments. The community is filled with unbelief, and disobedience to God's laws, with neglect of his ordinances, and with a temper in a multitude of respects diverse from the spirit of Christ. Of those for whom so much has been done, much will be required, and we may expect to be held to a very strict account. As individuals, as families, as a church and congregation, as a city and as a nation, we stand arraigned at the celestial bar for punishment, unless we avert it by a timely repentance. Let our humiliation be mixed with a large ingredient of charity. This period of general congratulation should subserve for us the purpose of the ancient "truce of God," in

which all private grudges and differences were forgiven and forgotten. It is no time now for acrimonious judgments and resentments. Let us make it the era of good feeling. Those who have violated the laws will be taken in charge as felons by the magistrates. If their case call for clemency, this prerogative is intrusted to the executive power. We private citizens are not called upon to give advice either in the way of condemnation or extenuation. As to those who have not violated the laws, Christ bids us, Love one another as brethren, and judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. It is an ill function for one to fulfil in society, to break down another's influence and reputation, and to wear deeper and deeper the furrows of animosity which sever old bonds of friendship, and divide neighbor from neighbor. Bowing in penitential sorrow before the throne of our divine Benefactor and Deliverer, let us forgive and love one another, and see to it that peace and good will prevail between the various parties, and classes, and households, which subdivide the people in church and state. Let him who will not abide by this good rule come under the ban of social outlawry, as a traitor against the common weal.

We have occasion to exercise a prudent and pious forethought as to our personal interests in the future. Shall the fields yield us their increase in the summer approaching? Shall we and our families flourish as to health, and as to our vocations? Shall we attain reconciliation with God, eternal life, growth in grace, and when called hence, a peaceful immortality? Shall we lay to heart the solemn teachings of daily events, and thus shall religion be revered

in the church and the congregation? These are points of great consequence to us. They are not included in national benefits. They are to be sought in humble supplication. There is occasion then for fasting as well as for thanksgiving, for prayer as well as praise, for solicitude as well as for exultation.

Our hearts should likewise be devoutly burdened for the national future. It will task the utmost wisdom of our chieftains, our magistrates, and our law-givers. Our port is in sight, but we have not yet entered it. Brute force and the stress of coercion will never secure harmony and prosperity for this great people. If our affairs are to flourish again, it must be through the working of God's spirit upon the popular heart far and wide, even as the hand of God has wrought in behalf of our armies. The work of reconstructing our civil fabric is one of enormous arduousness and perplexity. It will bring into requisition the largest capacities of those to whom it is intrusted. They will have to traverse unexplored and pathless fields of deepest intricacy. Let us flood them with holy and importunate intercessions that they may be guided aright, may be replenished with patience, forbearance, magnanimity, firmness, and wisdom, and that their strength may be according to their day. All that was good or inevitable in the old bonds that united the several states of the republic, may they induce the people harmoniously to retain; whatever improvements those bonds admit of, may we be led harmoniously to adopt; and may the bitter lessons of the past divest our national councils forever of foolhardiness, of bickerings, of sectional jealousy, of reciprocal contempt, and of unrighteousness and injustice. God grant that our rapturous dream of peace and in-

coming glory may not mock our hopes, but may speedily ripen into fruition. May the days in store not prove bankrupt to our demands, but redeem their fair promise to every class of our inhabitants. Every good citizen, whatever his partisan alliances, will cordially conform to the novel exigencies of the situation, will relinquish his grasp upon all that was evil in the past, and welcome all that is good in the future; will, at the same time, cling tenaciously to all that was good in the old, and resist the encroachments of all that is specious and baleful in the new. But how to come into harmonious agreement as to applying this general rule in its details!—ay, therein we need the outpouring of grace and wisdom upon our hearts from on high. On this point let all who know the way to the throne of grace concentrate their supplications with fasting and tears. And let the Christian motto of the nation be “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord.” The prayer and holy living of some poor obscure person, mighty in faith and in nothing besides, may do more for this land in the critical months before us, than the largest outlays of the resources of statesmanship.

We are passing forth to a future which shall try every man’s temper and every man’s work, in our national matters, of what sort it is. The gold, the silver, the precious stones, the wood, the hay, the stubble, in our feelings, in our utterances, in our doings,—this imminent fiery future shall try it all, and make it all manifest. In meek humility let us commit ourselves to God’s mercy, and calmly await the ordeal. Then afterwards, in the impending hour when heart and flesh shall fail us, may Jesus the Mediator be our hiding place from the tempest, and our portion forever.

NOTE.

The following paragraph is appended,—an extract from the sermon preached at the same place, on Sunday, April 16th :

The patriot, whether actuated by Christianity, or by human prudence and wisdom,—*while he will use his influence to promote the enforcing and the execution of the laws, while he will crave that every malefactor may be condemned, and punished according to his deserts,* and by the due processes of justice,—will never harbor a spirit of private malice; will never take the law out of the hands of the magistrate, and arrogate to himself the divinely forbidden prerogative of unauthorized judgment; will never hurl the bolt of irresponsible popular violence against a fallen foe; will never give way to a wild and wanton ferocity; will never lay one man's guilt at other men's doors; will never make his own wrongs, though they burn his heart, an obstacle to peace; will never dishonor the memory of the dead President, whose last days were spent in healing the dreadful feud in our land, by reviving that feud; will always remember that a restored union—painful as the self-denial involved in that condition may be—can only rest on broadly diffused forbearance and conciliation. A forest of gibbets can never yield fruits of national prosperity. Acres on which bleach the bones of their former inhabitants slain by revengeful violence, will be no good soil for liberty to root itself in, or for philanthropy

and the gospel to rear to themselves homes upon withal. The private citizen who, in this bitter hour of grief, cannot bow his head in meek humiliation, leaving his cause and his wrongs in the hands of God and the magistrate, but must needs foment anew the expiring discord to assuage his ire, knows not what manner of spirit he is of, nor whither his path tends. For, in his impotent, suicidal frenzy, he is tearing open yawning, fiery hell-gulfs, that will swallow up himself and us all.

A

S E R M O N

ON THE

FRUITS OF OUR BEREAVEMENT,

DELIVERED IN

THE TRINITARIAN CHURCH,

Sunday, April 23d, 1865,

BY WHEELLOCK CRAIG.

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New Bedford, Mass.

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S E R M O N .

GENESIS, I, 10, 11.—“And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation. And when the inhabitants of the land saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians.”

EXODUS, XIII, 19.—“And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.”

LUKE, II, 35.—“Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.”

It was indeed true, as we agreed a week ago, that we were in a dream. We were smitten down and stunned by the terrible blow. And all our utterances, in those first hours of our dismay, partook of the incoherency of somnambulism. On Wednesday, the day of the funeral solemnities, our slumbers, instead of being dispelled, had grown deeper and more bewildering than ever. Our minds were taken up with the strange, superficial aspects of our condition, and we but dimly discerned them after all. The hurried confusion of those swift, wild days, the midnight alarm, the nocturnal vigils, the constant thrill of the nerves, and the weight upon the brain, the draped buildings, and the silent, grotesque, melancholy streets,—these absorbed our thoughts, and precluded reflection upon profounder elements of the distressing theme. I am not sure that we

have attained a thorough spiritual calm even yet; but, to a certain extent, the heaven has had opportunity to fulfil its work in our spirits; and we are therefore better prepared than we then were to do what we did not then attempt,—that is, investigate the full nature of our calamity, and form an estimate of our loss. To accomplish this, let us humbly attempt to ask and answer the question, What results may we hope that the death of the President Abraham Lincoln will produce in the hearts of the people?

The first result that I shall mention is that the fragrant memory of his name will abide with them. That is a good thing. You know how the soil is fertilized by the falling leaves of autumn. You know how opulent cities gather into themselves libraries, picture-galleries, museums of art, master-pieces, the fruits of ripe culture, and how these precious acquisitions enrich old nations. So a people are enriched by their traditions. The nations of antiquity, and of Europe, are illumined with the lustre of their heroes and their sages. The Chinese carry this principle to so base an extreme that they even worship the shades of their ancestors. Now think how fair and great this name will be in the popular traditions! His apparent dimensions were large, even while he was living, and under the disadvantage of a close inspection. The eyes of his contemporaries were powerfully arrested by that career as it passed before their view,—the sturdy Kentucky lad, reared in puritan homeliness and simplicity, of stalwart frame, coping energetically with the perils of the wilderness, amassing knowledge, filled to the brim with a noble honesty and generosity, becoming the peer of the ablest and the best upon the official stage in the State adopted as his residence, nominated to the highest post in the gift of the people, triumphantly

elected, winning their hearts all along the route in that memorable journey to Washington by his modest demeanor and by invoking their prayers, assuming the reins of government at that most baffling juncture, persistently struggling to beat back the waves of treason, and to uphold the government, with quiet hopefulness amid the discouragements which pertained to the opening period of the war, selecting the time of it and then executing the masterly stroke of emancipation, in such a way as to ingraft that measure into the affections, and to secure for it the support of an invincible majority of his constituents, steadily holding on his way over the rough billows of costly expenditure, of public indebtedness, and of the military drafts that threatened to engulf him, ever winning fresh favor by the very procedures which seemed the most menacing and impracticable, emerging from the storm of a four-years' civil war, prosecuted on a scale of unprecedented magnitude, under a halo of resplendent victories, and surrounded by a group of indomitable chieftains whom he had gathered to his aid, the curtain of life closes upon him engaged in solving the problems of peace and reconstruction in a spirit of wide-reaching sagacity and magnanimity which elicited the enthusiastic devotion of both friends and foes. This shining sketch is only the unvarnished outline of the overt deeds which he wrought before the gaze of his countrymen. Concealed within this rich screen, there was a precious domain of the private life and of the heart, a merry wit, a genial glow, a racy common sense, tender domestic and friendly affections, lowly Christian devotion, a compassion gentle as that of woman to relieve distress and befriend the desolate. We, excluded from that inner view, and dwelling at a distance, knew, some of us, nothing at all of

this for a long time; but though hidden from our gaze, the jewel was there. Such was the man, as he confronted the eyes of his fellows. But then contemplate the marvellous providence pertaining to that life, which, "as the shining light," shone "more and more unto the perfect day." What had not God in store for that pious dame's farmer-boy, that Mississippi boatman and pioneer, that honest, unpretending swain, that western schoolmaster, that Springfield lawyer journeying to Washington to assume the chief magistracy? What in store? Why, the noblest place on earth, the highest official position, fraught with the grandest responsibilities ever known to mortals. At the hour of his death he occupied the loftiest pinnacle of honor ever reached by man. Joined to this official eminence, there was spiritual greatness. This leader of such a nation in its supreme crisis, foremost in the files of time, was likewise, through the mercy of God, invested with a heritage, as we have reason to believe, in the celestial kingdom. Faith linked his spirit to Christ, and secured to him a throne in the heavens. Last of all, death set a regal crown upon him. Death etherealizes the aspect of all good men, even though they be common men, much more extraordinary men. They look sweet and holy through the mist. Our love and reverence for them increase. Death subdues every rude lineament, and gives the character a softer aspect. How doubly true is this in the present instance! To die in such a service, to reap these bitter wages for such deeds, to have such a career thus cruelly quenched at the moment when the whole world stood ready to accord him their homage, how this disarms even the most hostile alienation, and draws out every heart in reverent fondness for him! As in the case of Samson, his death achieved issues not less important

than those which so great a life achieved. The very shedding of his blood by the murderous hand of that base dastard was a libation poured out upon the altar of his country. It electrified the popular heart, filled it with an intenser and loftier enthusiasm, lifted us all to a more exalted plane of feeling and purpose, welded men's souls together in a more unanimous fervor, and imparted to our determination the earnestness of eternity. Such was President Lincoln. Through his death this great and resplendent image, like a brilliant star, hangs fixed in the national retrospect, for the people to gaze at forever. This is one of the results of it.

In the second place, this event cements us into an earnest and outspoken agreement in favor of the extirpation of slavery. By the election in November, it was virtually decided that the question of the continuance or discontinuance of that most objectionable relation should be transferred from the domain of rights reserved to the States, and incorporated among the prerogatives of the general government. The people gave in their verdict that the general government should be sustained in exercising its authority to uproot and destroy slavery. Yet, even then, there remained considerable diversity of opinion as to the best time and method for insisting upon this most desirable consummation. The longing for it lurked in well-nigh every heart. The prayer that it might occur went up from well-nigh every lip. But there were, here and there, patriotic and philanthropic and loyal citizens, who, from a sincere and well-meaning regard for the permanent welfare of the nation, craved that this task might be left to devolve upon those who have claimed the constitutional control of it. We can thus wait no longer. The pressure of the late President's mighty

memory is sweeping away this blemish upon our institutions, as with the besom of destruction. The air is too dense with his transcendent influence for any contravening temper to pervade it. The climate is too hot with the people's wrath, in view of this terrible assassination, for opposition to President Lincoln's great favorite measure to live in it. The tide of fierce and righteous indignation against everything pertaining to the spirit and purpose of that execrable malefactor, combining with the current of public sentiment which had already set in, bids fair to carry off from the land the last slave-bond, on its overwhelming flood. The President's most foul and bloody murder puts a seal upon the fact that we are a nation of emancipators. So great is the momentum which the popular devotion to that departed ruler imparts to the official proceedings of his successor! So intense and magnificent is the inspiration which has been, let us hope, divinely communicated to the general heart!

In the third place, we gain, in connection with this event, an insight into the burdensome cares and perplexing researches allotted to a chief magistrate, and to other eminent officials. The door of the executive mansion stands ajar for a moment, and we catch a glimpse of what goes on within. The scene may well elicit our forbearance and commiseration. How harassing a position! What a strain upon the nerves! What a weight upon the heart! What a pressure to be withstood! What a vortex in which to retain one's foothold! It must be as much as one in that position can do to arrive at a decision upon so many points. Yet the position furnishes peculiar advantages for deciding. How utterly incompetent must the private citizen, at a distance, be to revise those conclusions! And yet you will find many a man assuming to be competent for the discharge

of the duties both of his own vocation and of the President's. *He* knows, forsooth, just how the country should be governed, how every appointment should be filled, and what measures should be adopted! Let the spectacle inculcate upon us a lesson of greater humility.

A fourth public result of this most deplorable event is that we are all brought to feel the force of the saying in the scriptures, If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. It shows us that the governor and the governed sustain a very intimate mutual relation, so that when the former is struck down, a burden of damage and woe falls, with crushing weight, upon the latter. At the first tidings men merely stood agape with affrighted wonder and horror. The earliest emotion excited was pity for those who stood in a sufficiently near relation to the dreadful transaction for it to expend its force upon them. Remote beholders were paralyzed by the dreadful spectacle, but seemed beyond the reach of its immediate influence. Now, however, we are finding that the devastating blight expands in ever-widening circles; and not a solitary citizen in the farthest corner of the land escapes it. Every one cries out, I, too, am hurt, my heart is pierced; and the deadly pang reaches to the inmost core. Amid our weeping for others, we are called to weep for ourselves. That bell-toll was not merely the signal that one in an eminent station had passed away, and the summons to a funereal pageant; it was also the knell of our own repose, the requiem of our peaceful felicity, the warning note telling us that trouble had crossed our own thresholds. It came to intoxicate neighborhoods with fury, to disturb cherished relations, to rupture old friendships, to set a man at variance with his own household, and to plunge the iron of grief and bitterness deeply into many a soul.

That distant ground-swell, seen in the offing, has come rolling in upon us, and who can tell what bark may not yet be engulfed by it? We cry out to God, Lord, save us, we perish; and to our fellow-men to take pity upon us. The public heart is irritated. The land is vexed. A mighty nation is enraged, and each several community clamors for a victim; not merely the real culprit, for the whole earth would rejoice to see him punished; but, in lieu of him, for any scapegoat on whom the stroke due to him may be inflicted. So, by a grievous discipline, we learn the lesson what it is to have the chief pillar in the national edifice torn down. In this, as in every instance, the blessing brightens as it takes its flight. Some may have thought that the pillar did them no good, or stood in their way; but now they find how sad it is to have the roof-tree come crashing in upon their heads. We experience a fulfilment of the prediction, "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." We are taught how great are our obligations, as the members of a political body to its head.

A fifth result should be great personal searchings of heart, on the part of every conscientious man, to ascertain what manner of spirit he is of, in his demeanor towards the government which protects him. It was said here a few days ago,—yet without any thought that the prediction would so soon be verified,—We are passing forth to a future which shall try every man's work and every man's temper, in our national matters, of what sort it is. The gold, the silver, the precious stones, the wood, the hay, the stubble, in our feelings, in our utterances, in our doings,—this imminent fiery future shall try it all, and make it all manifest. In meek humility let us commit ourselves to God's mercy, and calmly await the ordeal.—This time of searching and sifting

has already begun to be fulfilled. Are we ready to meet the emergency? Can we sincerely avouch our patriotism under the searching gaze of our countrymen, and before high Heaven? When the great attack was first made upon our government four years ago, we all felt it to be a privilege to banish past, minor differences, and to come out very openly with an announcement of our purpose of fealty. Now let us do the same thing again. Who regrets that in the days of trepidation and dismay, when the stormy years, now safely past, were a future all unknown, he gave a pledge, and has ever since before God faithfully kept it, that he would stand by the late President amid the perils which surrounded him? Are we sorry that we gave that pledge, and that by God's grace we have kept it? Let us do the same by his successor. Providence, indeed, seems to have anticipated us in this intention, and to have environed him, at the outset of his official career, with the panoply of a wonderfully unanimous cordiality and approval.

There are not a few of us who can never be politicians, in the technical sense. We join no organizations. We acknowledge no partisan designations. We march under no other than the national banner. We incur, without a murmur, the obloquy and the misrepresentation to which this course subjects us; for such a course is the tribute exacted of us by our vocation, by our training, by our habits of life. It is not in us to be politicians; and the attempt to be such would detract from our Christian effectiveness in our chosen lines of service. But we are patriots. We are loyal men. Our hearts and our voices are with the government in every hour of its extremity. And as, in the days of the taking of Fort Sumter, we said to President Lincoln, and to those enlisted with him in supporting the government,

so now we say to President Johnson and to his adherents, We are with you; count us in on your side; our help is not of much account, but such as it is, you shall have it. Keep the ship of state headed as President Lincoln had headed her, when his patriotic grasp fell from the helm, and all that we can do, we will do, to assist you in sailing her. And let no man of such a spirit give way to despair. God will help us, and all shall yet be well. When President Taylor died, men's hearts failed them for fear. On that occasion Henry Clay happened to be visiting Newport. A friend, calling on him, uttered the observation, The nation cannot stand up under this blow. You are wrong, rejoined Mr. Clay; President Taylor was a great man, and his death inflicts a great loss; but no man's life is indispensable to the prosperity of this government. Let us partake of that trustful spirit evinced by Henry Clay. Let us feel that underneath us are the everlasting arms.

These expressions of patriotism may be adequate to subserve our earthly purpose. But I must needs go a little further. I am not only a loyal man, but an ultraist in my loyalty. I cannot content myself with that flippant meed of loyalty which seeks the favor of men, feeds itself fat with the garbage of selfish ambition, prates in the dialect of popular and invidious catch-words, and parades itself ostentatiously abroad to make a fair show in the flesh. Let us have something deeper than this,—a loyalty so true and profound and free from all admixture of sinful passion that it can abide the gaze of the heart-searching God; for we must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ; and in such an hour as we think not the Son of man cometh.

This brings us to consider, finally, the highest result of this great national bereavement,—that of imbuing our pop-

ular activity with an intense spirit of religion, and of making us solemn and earnest in all our doings, as becomes men living in the light of eternity. President Lincoln set us this example. I wish that it had been possible to spread before the people, as they assembled on Wednesday, the accumulated evidences of this which were adduced, by those intimately acquainted with him, at the funeral solemnities in Washington. He was a man of trust, he was a man of prayer, he leaned on God, he felt his accountability, he looked forward to the recompense of eternal reward. He felt that all these things which we behold are to be dissolved, and he chose for his inheritance a better country. This is the testimony of those who knew him. Perhaps you were aware of it, but I was not aware, until seeing it recorded in a religious newspaper of the current week, that he said on one occasion, When I left Springfield for Washington and asked good people to pray for me, I was not a Christian; when I lost my dear boy, the sharpest sorrow of my life, I was not a Christian; but when I stood upon the field at Gettysburg and looked upon the graves of our brave men who had fallen for their country, I gave my heart to Christ, and I do love Jesus. The life speaks, then, even more eloquently than the death speaks.

You all have very quick feelings now as to the national honor. You will not tolerate upon your neighbor the slightest taint of treason. Are you equally loyal to God? Are you equally jealous for the maintenance of his government? Are you equally sensitive to purge yourself from the charge of rebelling against his laws? If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. What if God should say to us as we say to traitors, I will no longer dwell with them; how desolate would be our sanctuaries! May

he not already have almost said it? Let us entreat him to return to us. Christians, think of your covenant obligations! Think of the forsaken prayer-meeting! Sinners, think of the fall in Eden, think of the cross of Christ, think of the day of judgment! May the grand result of the shedding of the blood of the sainted Chief Magistrate be a gracious outpouring of the spirit of God from on high upon our rulers, upon our whole people, upon ourselves who are here met, this people, this church, these households, upon our every heart! Be ye also ready!

